

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**SPECIAL MEETING****Monday, April 20, 1998**

Present: *June Bailey, Lucy Burtnett, Bob Martz, M.S. Mitchell, William Sanders

Absent: Pat Consolver and Leon Robinson

Also Present: Ron Vine, Bucher, Willis & Ratliff; Chris Tatham, Leisure Vision - a division of ETC Institute; Leon Younger, PROS; Marvin Fisher, Park Finance Subcommittee; Ray Ontiveros, Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department; and Ron Hayworth, Larry Hoetmer, Vince Kendrick, Tim Martz, Janice McKinney, Tim Vanatta and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Burtnett called the meeting to order at approximately 3:05 p.m. She requested that the Board take up an item Off-the-Agenda concerning the Park Finance Subcommittee.

OFF-THE-AGENDA ITEM

1. **Marvin Fisher, Chairperson, Park Finance Subcommittee.** Marvin Fisher distributed a copy of the "Consortium Mission Statement" (copy attached) developed by the Park Finance Subcommittee. He said the subcommittee, which has been meeting for the past eighteen months, held a special meeting January 24. He stated that representatives from all cities within Sedgwick County were invited to attend to share information and ideas on park and recreation. He added that it was common knowledge that the Wichita park system was used by many individuals who lived outside the City limits. He said the subcommittee was attempting to develop a plan to coordinate and work with the various municipalities, other governmental entities and school districts to provide "seamless" access to parks and recreation throughout Sedgwick County using the adopted Wichita-Sedgwick County *Parks and Pathways*, Park and Open Space Plan and other locally adopted plans as guidelines. He added that the consortium will be exploring any funding alternatives to accomplish the mission statement. He briefly mentioned the need for a dedicated funding mechanism for parks and recreation.

Fisher concluded by inviting Board members to the next subcommittee meeting on Thursday, May 21, at 8:00 a.m. in the first floor boardroom. Burtnett requested a quarterly update on the subcommittee's activities.

AGENDA

2. **Discussion of preliminary results of the Park and Recreation Citizen Survey.** Ron Vine, Bucher, Willis & Ratliff; Chris Tatham, Leisure Vision - a division of ETC Institute; and Leon Younger, PROS. Chris Tatham distributed copies of the "Preliminary Results of the Citizen Survey". Ron Vine began the presentation by commenting that he felt both the mail and phone surveys were very comprehensive. He said Chris Tatham would give the overview on the survey results, since Chris was the project manager. He continued by saying that he had invited Leon Younger because Leon had met with park recreation staff and would be discussing programming strengths and weaknesses.

Chris Tatham stated that in order to obtain a statistically meaningful survey that was representative of each commission district, the goal had been to obtain at least 70 - 100 responses from each district. He said they actually received at least 110 responses from each district. He added that the results for the City as a whole were accurate to within plus or minus 3.4%. He said that percentage represented a very high level of confidence in the survey results. He said in addition to breaking the results down by commission district, he had met with recreation staff and together they divided the City into nine geographic zones in order to look at programming.

*June Bailey present.

Tatham reviewed survey responses commenting on the following items: pools, recreation centers, youth and adult recreation programs, park usage, physical condition of parks, renovation of existing facilities, construction of new facilities, funding for facility improvements - including a 1/4 cent sales tax increase and/or a property tax increase, closing older community centers and pools, privatization and demographics.

Burnett commented on the response regarding people not knowing what programs were offered at community recreation centers. She suggested that program information be distributed with local neighborhood newsletters instead of with the *Eagle*.

There was considerable discussion concerning how staff and Tatham came up with the boundaries for the nine geographic zones. Martz expressed concern regarding the validity of the survey results, comparing information from the nine geographic zones with information from the six commission districts. Tatham explained that the nine geographic zones were designed to address programming needs only and that there were no specific rules for determining the boundaries. Vine commented that community center locations were used. He added that program information obtained by the survey will be used by staff internally for programming and planning purposes. There was also discussion concerning percentages and number of respondents. Tatham requested that board members provide staff any questions or comments regarding the preliminary survey results prior to the next board meeting May 11.

Vine stated that once the survey has been finalized, the next step will be to set up three community workshops/public forums, geographically located throughout the City, to review survey results and obtain public input. He said his staff was currently completing the write up of the park facility

Special Park Board Meeting 4/20/98

inventory. He added that he would also present a report on 10-20 “key findings” which could involve anything from financing issues to facility conditions and programming. He said the above information and comments from the public forums will be available for the June Board Meeting, which will be a “visioning workshop” involving the Board and any other entities they would like to invite. He said the purpose of the June workshop would be to build consensus within the community. Vine introduced Leon Younger, PROS, and asked him to discuss programming.

Younger began his overview by stating that he had an opportunity to visit all the community recreation centers, pools and a majority of the parks. He offered the following general observations which he said have been discussed with park recreation staff:

- no common vision - very little planning - each recreation center is “doing its own thing” and are in competition with each other
- core recreation programs offered are not neighborhood specific - have been offering the same programs for a long time - no tracking of program life cycles
- facilities are 30-40 years old and look institutionalized - have a lot of excess capacity - wasted space
- 60% - 70% of the programs offered do not happen due to lack of participants - need to find program gaps and niches - need to look at neighborhood needs versus gut programming
- need good access to market research - on-going process to look at demographics and constantly test market - leisure market is extremely competitive
- need to look at how program information is distributed to the community
- some programs are very success, but there are program gaps - need to look at competition analysis to see who else is providing certain programming - eliminate duplication
- department needs to share information and resources
- space relationships within parks need to be analyzed - nice parks - but some design features need to be changed
- pools are built around 1950's and 1960's theme - need to be updated - design around themes to make recreation centers and pools destinations points
- other issues include safety, funding, handicapped access, image, signage, lighting and facility repair
- programs should drive design - recreation centers need to be program driven versus design driven - staff was trying to fit programs into facilities that were not designed for them. He explained that back in the 1960's the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) developed design standards that were no longer valid. He said the NRPA changed the emphasis to programming in the 1990's.

Burnett asked if Younger would be providing specific information regarding his analysis. Younger stated that each facility (recreation centers, pools and parks) had been evaluated in terms of strengths/weaknesses, opportunities, physical condition, program capacity and market capability. He added that he would provide recommendations and strategies for each facility in order to maximize resources. He said Wichita had some incredible resources. He concluded by stating that it was important to communicate the true cost of recreation services and facilities to the community.

Special Park Board Meeting 4/20/98

There was discussion concerning property taxes. Vine commented that property taxes were not as popular as sales taxes, but property taxes were particularly unpopular in Wichita. He made the observation that “perception is reality” and since close to 60% of the population has lived in Wichita twenty-five years or longer, Wichitans have some fixed beliefs and thoughts regarding park and recreation issues that are against national trends.

Mitchell asked for information on active versus passive recreation. Younger responded that walking was by far the number one activity which was why bicycle/walking paths and nature trails were so highly valued. He stated that typically the mix was 65% active recreation and 35% passive recreation, with a growing trend toward passive and non-directive recreation. There was additional discussion concerning various recreational activities and partnerships with other recreational providers. Burnett commented that she was surprised that a majority of people favored closing older pools.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Lucy Burnett, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk